



Refugee Services

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Purpose

The goal of the Bureau of Refugee Services is to assist newly arriving refugees to quickly assimilate into Iowa's population, helping them secure housing, employment, health care and other needs, and to help them become self sufficient.

Iowa is the only state to have a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Department of State for the direct resettlement of refugees.

Who

- The bureau serves individuals who have been legally admitted into the United States as refugees or asylees. Refugees are people who have suffered persecution or have a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinion. People who come to the United States solely for economic reasons are not refugees.
- Refugees in their first 90 days in the country receive the most intense service, followed by people who have been here less than a year. If funds permit, services may be extended to refugees who have been in the country for five years or less.
- In federal fiscal 08, the bureau resettled a total of 278 refugees, including 222 Burmese, 18 Sudanese, 11 Vietnamese, 12 Liberians, and eight Burundi.

What

For newly arriving refugees, the bureau:

- Obtains housing and essential furnishings and basic household items, clothing, and food, and assists with home management.
- Meets refugees at the airport and provides orientation to life in Iowa.
- Arranges for physicals and immunizations.
- Applies for Social Security cards and assistance programs where needed.
- Enrolls children in school.
- Refers adults to employment services, including assessment, employer expectations, job development and placement, employment retention, skills training, and computer lab training in English as a Second Language.
- Assists with language interpretation and translation.

How are We Doing?

- In FFY07 the bureau experienced a 50 percent increase in the number of refugees that it resettled. Arrivals increased another 35 percent in FFY 08. The caseload has shifted from 90 percent Africans to 90 percent East Asian. The challenge is to identify appropriate language resources and ways to increase volunteer hours and donations to meet the growing need.
- The bureau made 340 job placements in SFY 08 with an average wage of \$9.53. Eighty-five percent of these job placements offered health insurance within six months of employment.
- The bureau has resettled 12,881 refugees since the program began in 1975.